

the President of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. President Trajkovski lost his life in a plane crash this morning in the mountainous region of southern Bosnia. I would like to offer my most sincere condolences to the wife, son, and daughter of President Trajkovski for their tragic and untimely loss as well as to all of the families and friends of the two pilots and six aides on board the flight who also perished in the crash. Furthermore, I wish to extend my deepest condolences to the people of Macedonia who have today lost a truly forward-looking and unifying leader.

Boris Trajkovski, who served as President of Macedonia since 1999, will be remembered in the international community for his role as a peacemaker and a moderate in a region troubled by ethnic tensions and conflicts. These tensions and conflicts have at times been so severe as to threaten the stability and unity of Macedonia. President Trajkovski's accomplishments as a peacemaker are many and premised on his will to work together with all ethnic groups. Included among his accomplishments to this end is his role in a NATO-brokered peace agreement in 2001 that ended months of armed clashes between Macedonia's Slavic-speaking Orthodox Christians and ethnic Albanian minority. This agreement played an integral role in warding off a full-scale civil war in the country.

Since gaining its independence, Macedonia has been a member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of which I am proud to serve as Vice President. Thus I have followed closely the developments in Macedonia and have observed first hand the efforts made by Macedonia under the leadership of President Trajkovski to secure a peaceful nation and to move the country forward to a bright future. Just this past Wednesday, President Trajkovski signed Macedonia's formal application to join the European Union, a move that would further benefit the people of Macedonia in their attempts to cement democracy and prosperity in their nation.

It is my hope that the loss of President Trajkovski does not signify a loss in any degree of the strong unifying efforts in which he so strongly believed and for which he fought. As well as offering my condolences to the people of Macedonia in their time of grief, I also want to take this opportunity to wish them every success in overcoming this tragedy and continuing on the path of peace and prosperity.

It is my hope that the greatest legacy left by the loss of President Trajkovski is the ongoing effort to see across ethnic divisions and to secure a peaceful and unified Macedonia in an equally peaceful and unified Europe.

IN HONOR OF RAUL VARGAS

HON. XAVIER BECERRA

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 26, 2004

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, it is with the utmost pleasure and privilege that I rise today to recognize and pay tribute to a friend and an educator, Mr. Raul Vargas. For more than 32 years Raul has guided young men and women along the path of academic excellence and future leadership success. Through his years of

effort, more than 5,600 college undergraduate and graduate students from across the country have received scholarships totaling \$10.3 million during their time at the University of Southern California (USC) in Los Angeles. How fitting that on the evening of February 27, 2004, the USC Mexican American Alumni Association (MAAA), of which he is a founding member, will honor Raul Vargas for his lifetime commitment to education and inspirational leadership at USC.

The son of Felipe Vargas and Helena Sotelo, Raul Vargas was born on May 21, 1939, in Lordsburg, New Mexico. Raul lost his father at the tender age of four and when his mother married Alfredo Mejia, the family moved to Miami, Arizona. Growing up in this small mining town, Raul and his siblings Felipa, Alfredo, Alfonso, Elvia, and Elisa learned a strong work ethic and core values from their parents.

Raul is a proud alumnus of Miami High School and Arizona State University, where he earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration in 1961. That same year, Raul enlisted in the United States Army where he served until 1964.

Raul's service to his country evolved into a lifetime of service in the classroom. After completing his teaching credential at Arizona State University in 1966, Raul went on to teach Spanish in the Ontario School District in California. After five years of teaching, he resumed his studies at California State University, Los Angeles as a student in the Master's in Administration program. From there he continued his doctoral work in public policy at the University of Southern California. In January 1972, Raul joined the USC family as Executive Director of the Office for Mexican American Programs at the University of Southern California.

Raul has always been a hard worker and driven to succeed. Fortunately, he had the good sense to pause for a moment and recognize that the best thing in his life stood before him: Marcia Wyse. Raul and Marcia married in December of 1966. Together they have become an indivisible and indispensable team, blessed with a true partnership, friendship and love. Raul and Marcia are now the proud parents of two children, Tracie and Cesar, and one grandchild, Alexandra. And Marcia, in her own right, is one of our country's preeminent and forceful voices advocating for America's English-language learners and the value of bilingual education.

Raul's career has always combined his passion for students with his commitment to innovation as an administrator. So it was that in 1974, Raul and eight USC alumni founded the USC Mexican American Alumni Association with a bold, but untested vision to build a mighty anchor and support for Latino college enrollment at the University. Their success has surpassed all expectations. Raul and the MAAA recently completed the association's Endowment Fund Campaign which increased its endowment to \$2.1 million to assist future generations of Latino college students. Marcia will tell you that Raul takes great pride and honor in making a prestigious university like USC more accessible to Latino students.

Mr. Speaker, as family, friends and colleagues gather to celebrate Raul's many accomplishments, it is with great admiration and pride that I ask my colleagues to join me today in saluting this exceptional man and

brother to many. America, the University of Southern California, and America's future leaders have certainly gotten the better end of the bargain when the doors of education and public service opened to Raul Vargas. Fight on, my friend!

INTRODUCTION OF THE RESIDUAL RADIOACTIVE CONTAMINATION ACT

HON. LOUISE MCINTOSH SLAUGHTER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, February 26, 2004

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce important legislation that seeks to undo—in some small measure—an injustice done to thousands of American workers in the years following the Manhattan Project.

Beginning in the 1940s, throughout the United States, the government secretly contracted with hundreds of private-sector factories and laboratories to develop, test, and produce atomic weapons. For well over a decade, many of these facilities processed enormous amounts of radioactive materials such as thorium, uranium and radium. Yet, when the government contracts expired in the 1950s, few of these facilities were properly decontaminated.

In 2000, Congress saw fit to establish a reparations program for workers who developed diseases because of their work on our nation's atomic weapons program. Under the Energy Employees Occupational Illness Compensation Program Act (EEOICPA), workers could receive a one-time payment of \$150,000 and medical coverage for expenses associated with the treatment of diseases contracted due to this exposure. One major shortcoming of the program is its failure to compensate individuals made sick from their work in former atomic weapons plants—where the walls and floors were permeated with radioactive residue—for decades following the end of Cold War era production.

In fact, the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health released a report in the fall that found "significant" residual radioactive contamination existed in many of the former contractor sites well into the 1970s, 80s and beyond. Today, we see the legacy of this failure to properly decontaminate. Employees who, unbeknownst to them, worked in facilities with significant residual contamination, have contracted or succumbed to radiation-related cancers or disease.

The enactment of the EEOICPA was recognition that the federal government bore a responsibility to workers who were made sick and even died because of the work they did on the nation's atomic program. It is long since past the time for our government to take responsibility for its role in allowing these Cold War era facilities to remain dangerously contaminated and place workers needlessly at risk.

Mr. Speaker, the bill I am introducing today with my colleague, Mr. Quinn, the Residual Radioactive Contamination Compensation Act (RRCCA), would extend eligibility for the EEOICP to workers who were employed at facilities where NIOSH has found potential for significant radioactive contamination. For instance, of the fourteen facilities in and around